

10.0 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT *Note: This chapter is entirely rewritten*

Tiverton's challenge for the future lies in managing commercial and industrial economic development so that its tax base is strengthened and diversified, and jobs are provided for its residents, while its open spaces are protected and small town and rural character is maintained.

10.1 Economic Base

Tiverton's economic base has historically been derived from its abundant natural resources. From its origins as a farming and fishing community, the town has seen growth in manufacturing, light industry and local commercial enterprises; numerous retail and service businesses are located along the major commercial corridors of Main and Stafford Roads in north Tiverton. The increased cost of municipal *and educational* services, in part due to residential growth in town, is driving a need for additional economic growth to diversify the town's tax base. Future economic development that results in net tax revenue while not negatively impacting community character is the dominant sentiment expressed in public surveys and public workshops undertaken in recent years.

10.2 Agriculture, Fishing and Marine-Related Industries

Agricultural activities are a special form of economic enterprise in Tiverton. According to the Rhode Island Division of Agriculture and Marketing, farming output in the town includes dairy, sheep, hogs, fruits and vegetables, eggs and poultry, and Christmas trees. According to information from the Rhode Island Geographic Information System (RIGIS), approximately 2,100 acres in the town are in active agricultural use, totaling about 11 percent of the land area of the town. Some residents are actively involved in agriculture of one form or another, and many operate roadside stands from which they sell produce.

Tiverton has been associated with the fishing industry throughout its history, due to its location along the eastern shores of the Sakonnet River and Mount Hope Bay. The local fleet of quahoggers, lobstermen and fishermen operate in Mount Hope Bay, the Sakonnet River and up to 100 miles off shore. Some of the enterprises are seasonal but many operate year round, selling their catch to various wholesale and retail merchants located along the waterfront. The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management Division of Fish and Wildlife has an ongoing shellfish spawning area immediately south of Grinnell's Beach, where approximately 385,000 pounds of quahogs have been transplanted. The viability of this fish and shellfish industry is dependent upon maintaining the water quality of the Sakonnet River and the streams which feed into it.

Narragansett Bay and its tributary bays including Mount Hope Bay and the Sakonnet River provide expansive opportunities for recreational boating, which is an integral part of both the state's image and economy. Tiverton has several marine related businesses -- boat sales and supplies -- and a number of boat yards and marinas along Riverside Drive

and Main Road in the area known as the Tiverton Basin. The boat sales and services include inboard and outboard motor boats, sailboats, and canoes and kayaks. Wind surfing has become a popular draw at Fogland Point, which has been identified as a preeminent area for the sport.



Fishing is a traditional economic activity in Tiverton

10.3 Jobs, Services and Industry

Although Tiverton provides over two thousand jobs, it is primarily a bedroom community and a net exporter of workers. The 2000 Census counted 7,809 town residents over the age of 16 as employed. Those who commute to work have a mean commute time of 28 minutes. The break-down by employment category is shown in Table 10-1.

**TABLE 10-1
EMPLOYMENT BY CATEGORY, TIVERTON RESIDENTS**

<u>Employment Category</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
Management and Professional	2,624	33.6%
Sales and Office Occupations	2,323	29.7%
Service Occupations	1,170	15.0%
Production, Transportation and Material Moving	826	10.6%
Construction, Extraction and Maintenance	818	10.5%
Farming, Fishing and Forestry	<u>48</u>	<u>0.6%</u>
TOTAL	7,809	100.0%

Source: U.S. Census, 2000

10.4 Public Finance

In 2002, following the town-wide revaluation of property, the resultant burden shift in municipal taxes was an unsettling experience for some residents, particularly those on fixed incomes. The bulk of the town revenue comes from personal property taxes, particularly residential property, and there is a need for high quality economic development to offset this tax burden.

For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2004, the town had a total budget of \$30,102,067, with total revenues received of \$29,261,742 (actual expenditures were \$29,852,706). Of this amount, \$20,475,167, or 70% of the revenue, was generated from property taxes (including motor vehicle and business inventory taxes, which are being phased out by state law). State funding for education, reimbursement for the partial phase out of the motor vehicle tax and revenue sharing together provide approximately 22% of total annual revenue. The rest is generated by various fees, permits and licenses, and other assessments, including for example, payment in lieu of taxes by the Calpine Power Plant (\$680,351,000 for the 2004 FY). Tiverton property tax is levied at 100% of the assessed value, and in 2003, the town tax rate was \$14.05 per \$1,000 assessed valuation.

Table 10-2 shows the break down of property tax revenue for the tax roll year 2004, which clearly shows that the great percentage of property taxes come from residential categories.

TABLE 10-2
PROPERTY TAX REVENUE, TAX ROLL YEAR 2004

<u>Category</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
Residential	\$18,870,765	82.1%
Commercial	\$ 1,413,836	6.2%
Industrial	\$ 200,226	0.9%
Farm/Utility/Other	\$ 339,982	1.5%
Farm/Forest/Open Space*	\$ 771,557	3.3%
Motor Vehicle	\$ 1,110,250	4.8%
Business Inventory	<u>\$ 271,570</u>	<u>1.2%</u>
Total Property Tax	\$22,978,186	100 %

* State designation

Expenditures for the 2003-2004 fiscal year are shown in Table 10-3. Financing the public school system accounts for the bulk of the town expenses, close to two-thirds of annual expenditures. This is followed by expenses for public safety (police and fire) which generally approaches 13% of the budget, and financial administration (assessor, treasurer, tax collector, insurance, pensions, social security) which is approximately 9%. General government (debt service, legal services, courts and town government including administration, clerk, council, planning and zoning) and public works (road and building maintenance, landfill operations) together make up approximately another 9%.

TABLE 10-3
APPROPRIATED EXPENDITURES, FY 2003-04

<u>Category</u>	<u>Appropriated</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
Education	\$19,198,897	63.8%
Schools, Capital Expenditures	\$ 289,500	0.9%
School Department, Total	\$19,488,397	64.7%
General Government	\$ 1,253,593	4.2%
Financial Administration	\$ 2,753,577	9.2%
Public Safety	\$ 3,866,439	12.8%
Public Works	\$ 1,352,347	4.5%
Grants, Health and Sanitation*	\$ 812,982	2.7%
Parks and Recreation	\$ 98,810	0.3%
Associated Activities**	\$ 101,146	0.3%
Municipal, Capital Expenditures	\$ 374,776	1.3%
Municipal Government, Total	\$10,613,670	35.3%
TOTAL	\$30,102,067	100.0%

* Includes library services, payments to social service organizations, and rubbish and recycling collections

** Includes senior services and payments to various (non-regulatory) commissions

Town expenditures in the two general categories, municipal and education, shown in Table 10-4 for five recent fiscal years show a steady and significant increase in expenditures.

TABLE 10-4
BUDGET EXPENDITURES, FY 2001 – FY 2005

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Municipal</u>	<u>Education</u>	<u>Total</u>
2000-2001	\$8,813,793	\$16,504,785	\$25,318,578
2001-2002	\$9,571,077	\$17,690,808	\$27,261,885
2002-2003	\$9,960,997	\$18,507,812	\$28,468,809
2003-2004	\$10,613,670	\$19,488,397	\$30,102,067
2004-2005	\$11,841,158	\$20,908,730	\$32,749,888
% Increase	34.3%	26.7%	29.4%

At the time of the original printing of the Comprehensive Community Plan (1992), budget data from the FY ending in June 1990 was provided; for this fiscal year the total budget was \$16,664,000 (rounded up to the nearest thousand) with 4,676,000 (or 28%) appropriated to municipal expenses and 11,968,000 (or 72%) appropriated to education.

Over the fifteen year period (1990-2005), the town's budget has nearly doubled with the municipal expenses growing at a faster rate than the education expenses: 153% and 75% increase, respectively.

10.5 Economic Growth Opportunities

Approximately 2,000 acres of Tiverton are zoned for commercial and industrial use, and much of it remains available for development or redevelopment. To ensure that new development is consistent with the town's desire to protect its character and quality of life, Tiverton must address such growth related issues as public water and sewer availability, traffic and parking, commercial design standards, and impact on schools, public safety and surrounding neighborhoods.

Since the Comprehensive Community Plan was originally written, Tiverton has worked to identify suitable economic development opportunities. Two separate planning studies were undertaken. An economic development study completed in late 2003 by the firm Edwards and Kelcey was followed by a town center planning study undertaken by The Cecil Group in 2004. Both of these projects provided opportunities for community input. Although neither study has been formally accepted by the town, both contain development strategies that could be incorporated into future policy.

The economic development study recognized that the town's strong quality of life is rooted in its agriculture and marine traditions, and that the comprehensive plan emphasizes the community's goal of maintaining and protecting its historic and rural character. Recommendations focused on protecting and promoting agriculture and maritime industries, fully utilizing the town's Enterprise Zone designation, developing town-wide design review standards, strengthening the various commercial areas in town through physical enhancements and zoning modifications, developing a small business assistance program, and exploring tourism potential. The development of the town industrial/technology park and a potential town center were identified as specific projects to be promoted.

The town center study was done during a development moratorium adopted by the Town Council in order to properly plan for the future of several hundred acres of undeveloped land around Route 24 between Main Road and Fish Road. The plan recommends that the significant growth potential of this area be directed, in part, to a mixed use village center. This type of development would achieve many things -- increase the commercial tax base, provide additional retail services to town residents, increase affordable housing options, provide a location for municipal buildings, and add public green space to north Tiverton -- while keeping with the scale, character and image of Tiverton.

The economic development study included questionnaires and public meetings for both businesses and residents, and the town center study included a community wide public charrette (interactive workshop) and contact with impacted business and property owners. Results show that Tiverton is open to creative and well-designed non-regional, commercial development that diversifies the tax base, but is at a scale that does not

adversely impact its unique small town character, does not burden its roadways and does not contribute to sprawl.

Industrial/Technology Park

Tiverton has actively worked to develop its industrial park, located to the east of Route 24 near the Fish Road exit. In 2000, the town amended the zoning ordinance to allow for its development as a large scale office park, and a site plan containing sixteen pods on 126 buildable acres was prepared, and water and sewer lines were extended to serve the potential development. The marketing of the industrial park as a high quality office and technology park in the early 2000's was not successful. However, because of its access to public water and sewer, as well as the co-location of a natural gas powered electrical generating plant, the industrial park remains a desirable site for the location of high tech industries, office, research and development and light manufacturing uses.

Traditional Economic Activities

Agriculture is one of the economic activities in Tiverton which is most reflective of the town's rural and historic character. Its family farms contribute to the unique visual quality of the town, and preserve open space and natural resources while providing economic and quality of life benefits. Another example, the Pardon Gray Preserve, land acquired in 2000 by the Tiverton Land Trust, is being used by a local farmer as part of its management plan. This serves to maintain its economic and scenic contribution to the community. Supporting agriculture by protecting existing farmland and engaging in creative partnerships is a critical component of Tiverton's future.



Farming: An economic activity that is a way of life in Tiverton

The establishment of a Waterfront District in 2001 as part of comprehensive amendments to the zoning ordinance and map, and its application to various waterfront land from Nannaquacket Bridge north to the border with Fall River, provides a regulatory means to encourage and consolidate marine related uses. The opportunity exists to provide additional such uses and appropriately scaled development along Tiverton's waterfront that would enhance both the local economy and the town's maritime character.

The Main Road commercial area from Souza Road north to Fall River is the closest thing to a "main street" in Tiverton. The storefronts which line Main Road, particularly along the northerly end near Fall River, are a great resource for the establishment of small businesses which require low overhead and active street life. At the southerly end of this commercially zoned section of Tiverton's major commercial corridor, particularly in the areas close to the Villages on Mount Hope Bay, opportunities exist for the redevelopment of vacant or underutilized parcels into new commercial retail and service development.

Lastly, over the years Tiverton has developed a reputation for the arts, much of it focused on the Four Corners area where crafts, performing arts and nationally know art galleries combine with unique retail to provide successful economic center that enhances the character of the town. The development of the arts, as a component of tourism, can be another opportunity for economic growth that complements the town's character.



Many opportunities exist for redevelopment on Main Road's commercial corridor.

Economic development must complement the town's character



10.6 Economic Development Goal and Objectives

Goal

Expand economic opportunities in Tiverton, and pursue and support forms of development that will maximize economic benefit while preserving and enhancing the environment and character of the town.

Objectives

- Ensure that the local zoning regulations accurately reflect the goals and desires as stated in the Comprehensive Community Plan for future commercial and industrial development, particularly in terms of location and categories and intensities of uses.
- Plan for and support only commercial and industrial development that provides net tax benefits and is at a scale and design that is consistent with the character of the town.
- Ensure that all new commercial and industrial development is well designed, aesthetically pleasing, compliments the character of the town and does not result in site and traffic impacts that adversely affect the character and quality of life of the town.
- Maximize the economic opportunities of the town industrial/technology park.
- Encourage small business development and revitalization.
- Preserve and promote agricultural activities that maintain the rural character of Tiverton.
- Promote the utilization of Tiverton's waterfront for marine-related uses that would enhance the local economy and the town's maritime character.
- Promote and support the arts as an economic activity that enhances the quality of life in Tiverton.

10.7 Economic Development Policies

Commercial and Industrial Zoning

Commercial land uses in Tiverton are primarily located in north Tiverton. Although most of the commercially used areas were developed before the town was zoned, these areas generally correspond to the General Commercial, Highway Commercial or Waterfront Districts. Main Road, for a short section in the Stone Bridge area, and along its entire length north of Souza Road, and Stafford Road north of its intersection with Bulgarmarsh Road, together form the main commercial corridors in town and are zoned for General Commercial. The Highway Commercial District is in place along Souza Road and the Route 24 - Fish Road interchange, and at the north end of Stafford Road near the boundary with Fall River. The Waterfront District is in place along the shoreline of the Tiverton Basin, the site of the Villages at Mount Hope Bay, and at the very northwest corner of town along Mount Hope Bay (see Figure 5-2).

The planning studies and development proposals that have occurred since the 2001 comprehensive zoning ordinance and map changes have led to further consideration of the town's commercial zoning. In particular, two issues have arisen. One is the continuous commercial zoning along Main Road north of Souza Road. The commercial land uses along this corridor are separated in certain areas by residential land uses which have maintained their integrity despite being part of a "strip" commercial district, and actually serve to break the strip into distinct nodes. Both land uses may be better served by changing the residential areas along Main Road into residential zoning districts. The other issue is whether or not it is desirable to have a commercial district that promotes highway dependent and regional commercial uses. The town may be better served by modifying the Highway Commercial District so that it more accurately reflects the goal of the comprehensive plan, particularly this Economic Development Chapter, in terms of the preferred type and scale of new commercial development.

In addition, Tiverton currently has one Industrial District totaling about 1,400 acres, located along both sides of Route 24 generally from the Route 24 - Fish Road interchange north to the Massachusetts border. Much of this land remains vacant.

Policy 1: Evaluate the existing and potential uses of land zoned for commercial and industrial uses, and consider options for adjusting the land areas and intensity of uses so that future commercial and industrial development is compatible with the scale and character of the town.

New Commercial and Mixed Use Development

It is the stated goal of this chapter to provide for economic development in Tiverton which provides a benefit in terms of net tax revenue and jobs while not negatively impacting the town's cherished small town character, burdening its road system and contributing to sprawl. The town's geographic location and highway access make it very attractive to development, including retail development of a regional nature. The town must balance the rights of property owners to develop with the desire of the community at large to manage such development so that it enhances the town's character, not takes away from it.

The planning studies undertaken on behalf of the town in recent years emphasize high end and niche retail, waterfront related retail, and retail that responds to local needs such as a grocery store. Also recommended is residential-commercial mixed use including housing over stores. Most desirable would be a town center development that includes public and municipal facilities and affordable housing as part of a village style development. A retail center could be developed as a mixture of store types and sizes arranged in a traditional main street pattern, with two story buildings that include residences and offices over retail. Providing for such a relatively dense mixed use development in Tiverton will require amendments to the zoning ordinance to specify the mix of allowable uses as well as site and design standards.

Policy 2a: Support and promote new retail commercial developments which primarily serve local needs.

Policy 2b: Consider the development of a “Tiverton Town Center” that consists of a comprehensive mixed use development.

Commercial Design Guidelines

The Tiverton Zoning Ordinance requires design and site plan review for new industrial and commercial development that meet a certain threshold requirement. Concern with guiding the aesthetics of new development, particularly commercial development along Tiverton’s main business corridors, Main Road and Stafford Road, led to the establishment and funding of a Design Standards Project initiated in late 2004 by Dodson Associates of Massachusetts. The project evaluated the development potential of certain sections of Main Road and will result in the creation of a design guidelines booklet to direct property owners and developers in their plans for new development in the commercial districts. The guidelines will address such issues as building design and placement, parking, buffers and landscaping.

Policy 3: Adopt and apply building and site design standards for new commercial development and redevelopment in Tiverton.

Fiscal Impact

Well designed commercial development at an appropriate scale benefits the citizens of Tiverton by providing employment opportunities and expanding the tax base. In general, commercial entities require fewer town services, and the costs of these services can be offset by user fees.

While integration of development design standards in the zoning code will assure quality development, resulting in higher quality employment opportunities and increased project value, it would also be in the town’s best interest to have an independent evaluation of the annual tax revenue generated by a development as compared to the expected cost of services. Such a fiscal impact analysis should be done for any commercial, industrial or mixed use development done as part of a comprehensive land development project.

Policy 4: Require fiscal impact analysis of commercial and mixed use developments to determine the impact on the town’s tax revenue versus cost of services.

Industrial/Technology Park

The industrial/technology park, serviced by water and sewer and with potential energy provided by the gas fired power plant, remains available for development. This land could be used for a range of nonresidential uses, including light manufacturing and clean

technology, office and associated uses, with the proper densities, design controls and mixture of uses.

Policy 5: Promote the development of the industrial park for suitable light manufacturing, technology, office and associated uses.

Small Business Development

An active program to improve the image and functioning of the Main Road commercial area from Souza Road north to Fall River would support existing businesses and encourage new ones. In addition to reconsideration of the commercial zoning along the entire length of Main Road, and the development of design standards for new development and redevelopment, a revitalization study for this area could identify the types of improvements needed. Such improvements could include streetscape enhancements, shared parking and cohesive signage. Other areas of town, such as Bliss Four Corners, Stafford Road and Stone Bridge could benefit from a concentrated program of business improvement and development. An office of economic development or a full time town planner could assist in this goal.

A proposal to create a Tiverton Small Business Association was awarded grant money from the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation to assist the business owners locate and obtain financial, educational and consultative resources to help their businesses survive and thrive. In 2004, the Tiverton Economic Development Commission began the organizational activities of such a group.

Policy 6: Support the Small Business Association in assisting in the revitalization of businesses along Main Road in north Tiverton, and in other areas of the town.



Tiverton's small businesses are very important to the town

The entire community of Tiverton is within the Tiverton/Portsmouth Enterprise Zone. This designation provides for town and state tax benefits to commercial enterprises which expand, relocate or locate in the town. The impact of these benefits must be recognized when studying new development. It is apparent from business surveys conducted that many Tiverton business owners are not aware of the enterprise zone or do not find it beneficial. The town should schedule workshops to educate the business owners and provide a conduit for requests for assistance.

Policy 7: Encourage businesses to benefit from the enterprise zone designation.

Amendments to the Tiverton Zoning Ordinance in 2001 addressed restrictions impacting small and home based businesses. One amendment dealt with “mixed use residential”, a residential use and a commercial use in the same structure, totally separated; this use is now allowed by right in the General Commercial District and by special use permit in the Village Commercial and Waterfront Districts. This would typically consist of a residence above a first floor business, and is seen as a way to make commercial areas more vibrant and interesting and to make businesses more viable by adding another source of income (as well as providing housing). It could also include multiple residences over larger retail areas or businesses, although this is not specifically addressed in the zoning.

Policy 8: Evaluate zoning ordinance regulations addressing mixed uses and modify where needed to allow for the diversification and strengthening of the commercial areas in Tiverton.

Agriculture

To support family farming, farmers will be targeted as prospective members of the proposed Small Business Association, and as such will be eligible for the grants, low interest loans, educational assistance and consultative services that will be made available by the association. The Economic Development Commission has also liaised with the Eastern Rhode Island Conservation District office to provide education and resources for Tiverton farmers, particularly those with smaller acreage to provide education and resources to maximize revenues.

It also might be advantageous for the association or a consortium of farmers to investigate the possibility of creating a centrally located farmer's market at which citizens could purchase seasonal produce, baked goods, cut flowers, etc. Currently, the closest such markets are in Fall River, Bristol and Portsmouth.

Policy 9: Promote expansion of agricultural activities in the town through the efforts of the Small Business Association and the Eastern RI Conservation District.

Existing farms in areas zoned for residential use are liable to be pushed out when development pressures rise, thereby destroying the rural quality of Tiverton. A tax assessment system which allows farmers to be taxed at a rate appropriate to the current agricultural use of the land can help ensure that Tiverton's farms remain, and the town's visual character is maintained. Rhode Island has a long-standing law allowing for lower taxation of agricultural and open space land; information about this Farm, Forest and Open Space Program should be disseminated throughout the farming community.

Policy 10: Continue the use of tax alternatives/incentives that encourage preservation of agricultural land for farming use.

The importance of regional agricultural planning for the preservation of farms is recognized and encouraged at the state level. Regional cooperation ensures that the implications and decisions about issues impacting on agricultural activity in the region are fully understood. It would seem only natural to avail the town of the expertise of the highly successful Southeast Massachusetts Coastal Agricultural Cooperative by facilitation of membership of town farmers, fishermen and merchants of town grown consumables.

Policy 11: Partake in regional planning for agricultural activity and support together with East Bay townships, southeast Massachusetts towns and state agencies.

Waterfront Opportunities

Tiverton's active long-running fishing industry has been somewhat constrained by the lack of modern facilities. A new public boat launch would enable local fishermen to launch their boats more quickly and efficiently, allowing business expansion and increased employment opportunities.

In addition, while boat sales and services are in place along the waterfront, recreational fishing and boating could also be encouraged and expanded through the development of more slips and/or an establishment with docking facilities, as well as with development of the boat launch and facilities for kayak and canoe deployment.

Supporting these maritime uses and protecting an important part of Tiverton's economy requires maintaining the old Stone Bridge abutment which provides a harbor for the fishing fleet and recreational boats. The town dock at Stone Bridge, currently used by commercial shellfishermen, is also important for access to the Tiverton Basin; a condition of state funding of improvements to the abutment is use of the dock by commercial fishermen.

Policy 12 Promote local fishing and marine related businesses by developing and rehabilitating appropriate support facilities.

Several parcels of land along Tiverton's waterfront, particularly north of the Sakonnet River Bridge, are vacant or underdeveloped. In addition, several acres of land will become available with the relocation of the bridge (See Circulation Chapter 8). The town should work in conjunction with the R.I. Department of Transportation to ensure the relocation of water dependent businesses that are displaced as a result of the bridge realignment, as well as on plans for the redevelopment of the available parcels. This work could be done as part of a larger study of Tiverton's waterfront which includes a review of current land use, regulations and controls to guide future development in a manner that promotes water dependent uses while maintaining public access to the waterfront.

Policy 13: Adopt a long term waterfront plan incorporating marine-related uses, particularly focusing on the area north of the Sakonnet River Bridge.

Arts and Culture

In addition to the arts activities on-going in Tiverton Four Corners, a proposed arts community off Crandall Road south of Bulgarmarsh Road under planning stages in 2005 would provide affordable housing for 50 artists, along with an art gallery and restaurant. The colony would function as a cooperative, allowing artists to buy or rent one of the units, provided they meet the income guidelines, and share in the community gallery space. This is one means of promoting Tiverton as a community for artists and the arts.

Policy 14: Support the artist community and promote the development of the arts as another form of economic activity.



Tiverton Four Corners is a unique and attractive village shopping area focusing on the arts